THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH

BUT "BACHELOR" CHRIS SOULES IS DOING HIS BEST TO FOLLOW IT. PAGE 20

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Monday, February 2, 2015 www.metro.us | t: MetroPhilly | f: MetroPhilly

METRO FOCUS
PRISONS

Locked and loaded

Overcrowded. Prisons Commissioner Lou Giorla is retiring, but he leaves behind an institution plagued by a congested justice system. PAGE 02

Inside the Philadelphia Prison system's Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility, which serves as the county's main intake and administrative facility. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

City, state, NRA lawyer up for a showdown

PAGE 06

Get your guy onboard with going vegetarian

PAGE 21

Villanova students build their dream car

PAGES 22-23

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1 NEWS

Top 3

The best of Metro.us

1 Arrogant Roger Goodell must change his ways soon

2 New site turns your Tweets into poetry

3 Justin Timberlake Instagrams first pregnancy photo of Jessica Biel

On the go

Want to read Metro on your mobile device? Get the app! All you have to do is search for Metro US in the App Store or Google Play to get all the latest in news, sports, lifestyle and entertainment for free.

Inside the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility, aka Holmesburg Prison, which is the county's main intake facility. It also houses the highest security prisoners. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER

Overcrowded and in search of a solution

Q&A. Prisons are packed to the rafters, and the city's commissioner talks with Metro about the problem

Philadelphia prisons are crowded.

Everyday, more citizens are shuffled in, and fewer and fewer inmates are shuffled out.

Philadelphia Prisons Commissioner Lou Giorla, who is retiring next year, has been working to fix the problem for 33 years.

Between 2008 and 2011, he succeeded: the prisons saw a sharp decline in its populations. But from 2012 to 2014, the numbers crept back up to pre-2007, over capacity, numbers.

In the first of a three–part series, Metro examines the issues from three perspectives: the prisons, the judicial system, and the families of those incarcerated.

In part one, Giorla discusses the overpopulation problem, his ideas on how to fix it, and what can be done moving forward.

Does the prison system have any real control over who is admitted and who is released?
We have some control over who is released from jail, because our programming can gain inmates time off their sentences. If they participate, do well and have clean disciplinary records, they can reduce their time.

For pre-trial detainees, we don't have much of an influence. But we work as part of the Criminal Justice Advisory Board to look at deficiencies in the system and to minimize pre-trial detention. … I don't mean … just letting people go. We're talking about an efficient trial system, and the sharing of information among the agencies that will allow us to work faster and better.

What about violent crime?
We've seen an increase in the number of violent offenders in our custody in the last year or two, primarily because the city's successful efforts to reduce violent crime have caused a lot more people to get locked up. The thing is once they get locked up, that trial process sometimes takes longer than we like.

Right, so you have to hold on to them longer.
Yeah, you have a pre-trial homicide defendant who might spend two-to-three years here awaiting trial.

Is that average?
Yeah, that's about average. We're trying to reduce that time of stay and make the process more efficient. … Because pre-trial is just a temporary status. And once they get adjudicated and either sentenced to time (at Holmesburg Prison) or state sentence or put out on some type of probation, or diversion program, and we want to make that process as quick as possible.

How many beds do you have in the system and how do you handle the overcrowding?
We have about 6,900 permanent capacity beds throughout our campus (in Holmesburg) and we have four satellites. Over the years, we've created temporary housing areas and some other alternative housing areas to accommodate the overflow. In some cases, we've re-purposed recreation areas as housing, we took some former offices and activity rooms and re-purposed them as housing. Here and in the house of correction, we use a third bunk in a cell that is designed for two people. Here we use a plastic shell like a cot. In the house of corrections we use a metal rack, a third bunk, because the cells are bigger. And we try and keep those beds to a minimum. We monitor them hour by hour, shift by shift. We rotate individuals every 60 days so that they're not in those quarters constantly.

Quoted

"You have a pre-trial homicide defendant who might spend two-to-three years here awaiting trial."
Giorla

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THE REALITY OF BUDGET CUTS

Street talk

DAVE WARNER
METRO COLUMNIST/ VETERAN NEWSMAN
Dave Warner tackles Philadelphia metropolitan issues. Email Dave at EditExpress@verizon.net.

Stephen Flemming paints walls, copes with pediatric medical issues, and knows where to go to buy supplies for his workplace.

Flemming, 32, is a third-grade teacher at the John B. Kelly Elementary School in Germantown.

He has had to paint the walls in his own classroom, tend to ailing kids on the days when there's no nurse on duty, and buy his own classroom supplies, which so far this school year have cost him $700.

The new governor, Tom Wolf, should meet Flemming, and help a district with more than 142,000 kids.

Wolf has a $2 billion budget problem in Harrisburg, but he might also want to focus on an intractable school problem in our town, a school system starved of hundreds of millions of dollars by Wolf's predecessor.

So far, the district has eliminated 5,000 jobs, reduced school budgets, cut back on cleaning and maintenance, reduced some academic resources and there's still a deficit that could hit $80 million this year.

Stephen Flemming at the John B. Kelly Elementary school in Northwest Philadelphia. /CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

That's the view from the top.

Flemming, who loves his job at Kelly, in a neighborhood of mostly well-kept row houses, copes with the street-level realities of teaching every day.

He remembers the first time he laid eyes on room 207, his home for this school year.

"I'm a grown man, and I wanted to cry," he said. "I really did."

"It was faded," he remembers, "I don't even know what the color was."

With the help of his sister, and supplies he paid for himself, he painted the room baby blue, a shade he finds bright and welcoming.

"I don't control much," he said, "but I can at least control 207 and the way 207 looks."

Among the things he can't control is that the sole school nurse works only three days a week, a fact that makes him feel vulnerable as he deals with things like student nosebleeds.

A student could have something serious, he said, and he has no medical training.

He and other teachers at Kelly cope, too, with cutbacks in the corps of what are called noontime aides who oversee the school's 700 kids at lunch. There used to be six or eight aides, now there are four.

Flemming says he wouldn't give a moment of thought to quitting and going to the suburbs to teach.

These Kelly kids and others like them, he said, need teachers like him, who grew up on the streets of Philadelphia.

The message to the kids, he said, is that if he can make it having been raised on the streets of the city, then they can make it, too.

"They need teachers who love what they do, who care about them," he said.

So, over to you Gov. Wolf. Those 142,000 lives must count for something.

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South Jersey

Man admits to shooting, killing roommate

A South Jersey man shot and killed his roommate during a dispute early Saturday.

William Clark, 50, called police around 3 a.m. Saturday morning to report he shot and killed his 51-year-old roommate, Steven Johnston, in their Audubon, Camden County, apartment, according to 6ABC.

Police found Johnston's bloodied body in the apartment, on the 400 block of the White Horse Pike.

Clark will be charged with first-degree murder, the news outlet reported. TOMMY ROWAN

Fatal

1

Johnston died from a fatal gunshot wound to the head.

Philadelphia takes aim at NRA's assault on gun laws

Guns. The state, city and NRA are caught up in a fight over local control of gun laws.

New state law trumps local government's right to regulate guns. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

Philadelphia lawmakers are working to protect local gun rules, as a lawsuit filed by the National Rifle Association under a controversial new state law seeks to dismantle those protections.

"I think a lot of people maybe didn't realize how significant this was," Shira Goodman, executive director of Ceasefire PA, said of the new state law, Act 192.

The city has also filed a lawsuit to invalidate Act 192, which former Gov. Tom Corbett signed in November. The law prohibits any municipality from enacting gun-related ordinances that are not state law.

Mayor Michael Nutter called ACT 192 "legislative madness" after it was signed in November.

The National Rifle Association filed a lawsuit two weeks ago against Philly's local gun ordinances, citing Act 192.

"A patchwork of local gun control ordinances creates confusion for law-abiding citizens as they travel throughout the Commonwealth," the NRA said in a press release. "The illegal ordinances in question do not make people safer."

But City Council President Darrell Clarke and Councilman Curtis Jones Jr., who oppose Act 192, are sponsoring a bill to consolidate city gun rules and remove obsolete provisions. The bill is part of a legal strategy, should Philly be forced to defend its gun ordinances in court, Goodman said.

"They want to only defend the exemptions that they think are well within their power or are most important to the safety of Philadelphia," she said.

Quoted

"Now, you can ban smoking in parks, but not guns."
Goodman

SAM NEWHOUSE
@scnewhouse
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The suit

The lawsuit seeks to overturn these ordinances:

- Guns can be removed from those who "pose a risk of imminent harm to themselves or others"
- Convicted abusers can be banned from buying or having a gun
- Requiring lost or stolen guns to be reported within 24 hours
- Bans on carrying guns in public
- Carrying guns in city facilities
- Ban on selling guns in public during a declared emergency
- A ban on those 18 and under firing guns.

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Union. Workers strike for new pact at nine oil, chemical plants

Union workers took to picket lines on Sunday after strikes were called at nine U.S. refineries and chemical plants in a bid to pressure oil companies to agree to a new national contract covering workers at 63 plants.

The walkouts, the first held in support of a nationwide pact since 1980, target plants that together account for about 10 percent of the nation's refining capacity. The discord comes as plunging crude prices force oil companies to slash spending.

The United Steelworkers union (USW) said Royal Dutch Shell Plc, the lead industry negotiator, halted talks after the union rejected a fifth proposal from the company.

"Shell refused to provide us with a counter-offer and left the bargaining table," USW International President Leo Gerard said. "We had no choice but to give notice of a work stoppage."

Shell said it would like to restart talks. REUTERS

Quoted

"We remain committed to resolving our differences with USW at the negotiating table and hope to resume negotiations as early as possible."

Shell

Workers

30K

The expiring three-year national contract covers about 30,000 hourly workers at plants that together account for two-thirds of U.S. refining capacity.

Obama targets foreign profits with new tax proposal, GOP skeptical

The annual budget proposal is as much a political document as a fiscal roadmap, requiring approval from Congress. / GETTY IMAGES

Helping the middle class. Obama's latest tax proposals are part of a broad tax reform package.

President Barack Obama's fiscal 2016 budget will seek new taxes on trillions of dollars in profits accumulated overseas by U.S. companies, and a new approach to taxing foreign profits in the future, but Republicans were skeptical of the plan on Sunday.

Reviving a long-running debate about corporate tax avoidance, Obama will target a loophole that lets companies pay no tax on earnings held abroad, the White House said. But his proposal was certain to encounter stiff resistance from Republicans.

In his budget plan to be unveiled on Monday, Obama will call for a one-time, 14 percent tax on an estimated $2.1 trillion in profits piled up abroad over the years by multinationals such as General Electric, Microsoft, Pfizer and Apple. REUTERS

Quoted

19%

He will also seek to impose a 19 percent tax on U.S. companies' future foreign earnings, the White House said.

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Troup County

Five found slain in Georgia house; police say suspect is 26-year-old

Georgia police were searching for a 26-year-old man on Sunday in the killings of five people whose bodies were discovered in a house the night before.

The victims ranged in age from 16 to 60, Troup County Sheriff's Department spokesman Stewart Smith told Reuters.

Four of the five victims were related, Smith said. He added that the man being sought is the spouse of one of the victims.

Four of the victims were shot and authorities are trying to determine the cause of death of the fifth.

Quoted

"One of the victims had not been to work for a couple of days and their employer was concerned and called 911."

Smith

An employer of one of the victims called police to the house outside Lagrange at about 10 p.m. Saturday, the sheriff's spokesman said. Lagrange, a town in Troup County near the Alabama border, is about 70 miles southwest of Atlanta.

Deputies entered the home by force and discovered the bodies inside, said the spokesman. REUTERS

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Fire could smolder for weeks in NY

FDNY firefighters work to contain a building fire at the CitiStorage warehouse building in the Willamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn. / GETTY IMAGES

Blaze. Mountains of paper feed the flames in burning Williamsburg warehouse.

It could take two-to-three weeks for New York City firefighters to be 100% sure the smoky conflagration in a massive public records storage warehouse is extinguished, the FDNY said Sunday.

The city's Bravest were poised to enter a third day Monday at the waterfront facility at the foot of North 11th Street – and the explanation for frustrated residents in the now-trendy hood? Paper. Mountains and mountains of public records from courts, health agencies, and child welfare.

"Tremendous amount of flammables," said James Leonard, FDNY chief of department. "This type of building, too, once that paper starts burning, it's very difficult. It burrows in."

Folks downwind of the CitiStorage inferno are urged to stay indoors and keep their windows closed until the clouds and acrid odors dissipate, city health officials said.

Meanwhile, it has emerged that fire crews had responded to a smaller fire at the facility several hours before the big blaze erupted, and that the half-block-long warehouse was fully engulfed when crews returned at 6:20 a.m.

Whipping winds and winter's deep freeze made attacking the inferno that much more difficult for the 275 firefighters and 55 units that were called to battle the 7-alarm conflagration, officials said.

As the winds calmed late Sunday, the FDNY had a better handle on the scene. Other than one person suffering smoke inhalation at the scene, no serious injuries were reported. JOHN A. OSWALD, METRO

Quoted

"Tremendous amount of flammables ... This type of building, too, once that paper starts burning, it's very difficult. It burrows in."

James Leonard
FDNY chief of department

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Air bags were made to save lives, but recent recalls has revealed the dangers. / GETTY IMAGES

Automakers can't make air bags work

Washington. Two senators have pushed for a more aggressive policing of the auto industry.

Regulators' push for a second recall of 2.1 million cars and trucks whose air bags could go off while driving delivered more cautionary tales about a complex life-saving technology that's had a very bad year.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration held an unusual Saturday press briefing to warn the public that an earlier recall of nine models from Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV, Honda Motor and Toyota Motor didn't work entirely. The agency is asking vehicle owners who haven't completed the first repair to do so now.

That may mean a second trip to the dealership for consumers, assuming replacement parts for the new fix are available, which they may not be for some time. Added to the mix: Some of the cars being recalled for a second time were part of last year's massive 10-automaker recall of Takata air bags for a different defect: inflators that could explode with deadly results.

"If you own an affected vehicle, this means driving around with the knowledge your air bag might still randomly deploy," said Karl Brauer, a senior analyst at Kelley Blue Book. It's the biggest challenge to the technology since the mid-1990s, when NHTSA began investigating reports that first-generation air bags deployed with such force that children and small adults riding in front seats were being killed and, in some cases, decapitated. **BLOOMBERG**

Quoted

"Some of these vehicles are equipped with Takata air bags, meaning the random deployment could include metal shrapnel." Brauer

California. State suffers dry Jan., prolonging devastating drought

California has experienced one of the driest Januaries on record, and the lack of rain during a time of year when the weather is usually wet indicates the state is likely headed for a fourth straight year of drought, officials said.

A prolonged drought could portend further economic and environmental setbacks for the nation's most populous state, which has already lost both crops and jobs to the dry weather.

The state's driest January on record was in 1984, when the 30-day average precipitation in the state reached 0.33 of an inch, under one method used to gauge rainfall statewide, said National Weather Service meteorologist Jim Mathews.

The California sunset: pretty and dry / GETTY IMAGES

With the official measurement of this January's rainfall coming within a few days, it is shaping up to be the fourth driest January on record in the state, Mathews said. **REUTERS**

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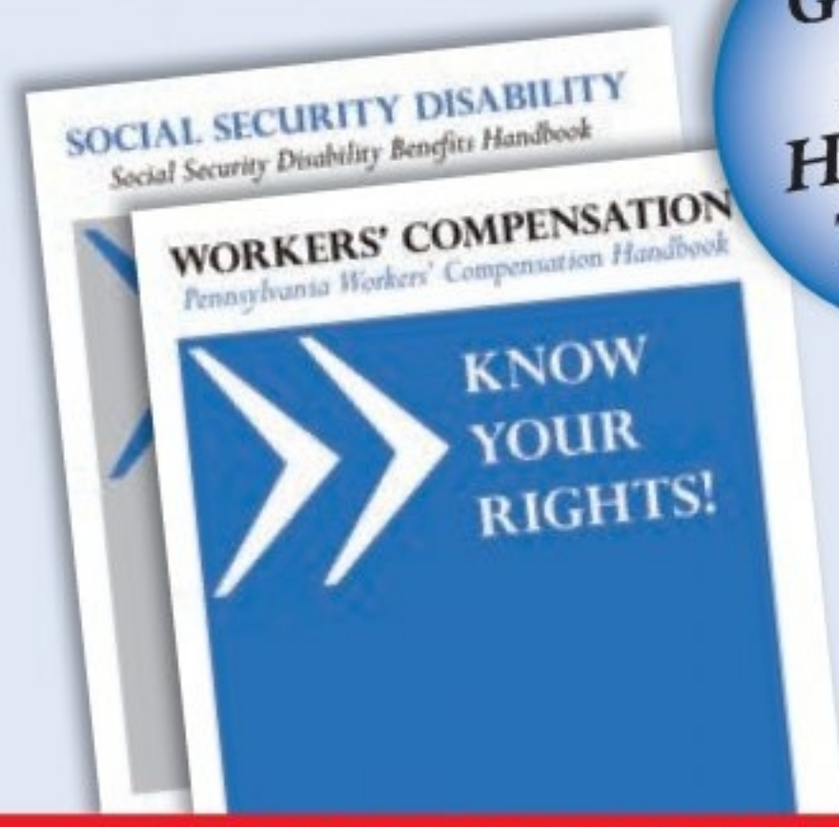

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New Mexico

Toddler shoots father and pregnant mother at motel

A 3-year-old boy shot and wounded his father and pregnant mother with a 9 mm handgun that he pulled out of the woman's purse while searching for an iPad, police in New Mexico said on Sunday.

Both parents needed hospital treatment for non-life threatening injuries after the bullet went through his father's buttocks and into his mother's shoulder, Albuquerque Police Department Officer Simon Drobik said.

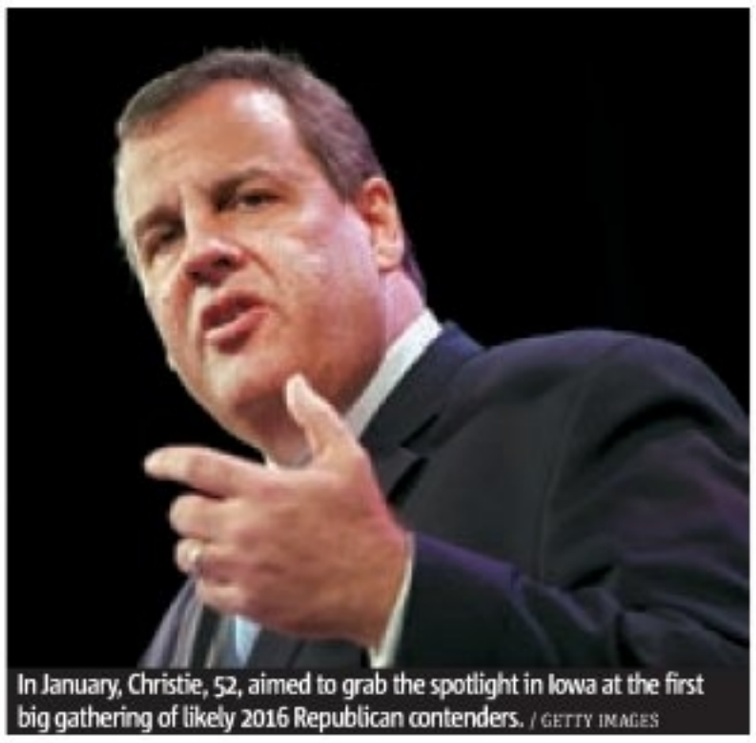
The woman, who is eight months pregnant, is being kept at the hospital for observation. The man was released, said Drobik, who was the first to arrive at the scene of the shooting at an Albuquerque motel on Saturday.

"On the kid's side, it's a horrible accident that happened, but the parents are still culpable," Drobik said. "They should have secured the gun."

The couple could face felony negligence charges, Drobik said.

REUTERS

New Jersey Gov. Christie heads to UK for trade, politics and soccer



In January, Christie, 52, aimed to grab the spotlight in Iowa at the first big gathering of likely 2016 Republican contenders. / GETTY IMAGES

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, a likely 2016 Republican presidential contender, will be promoting his state's life sciences industry in a trip to the United Kingdom starting Sunday, where he is also scheduled to meet the prime minister and catch an Arsenal match.

The brash, charismatic, second-term governor is expected to soon announce whether he intends to run for president. On Jan. 23, Christie supporters formed a political action committee, the biggest indication yet that he will make a bid for the White House.

The UK is the third largest trading partner for New Jersey after Canada and Mexico, and the trip will focus on pursuing new opportunities for growth between UK and New Jersey in the field of life sciences, Christie told reporters on Friday in embargoed remarks.

Christie will attend a life sciences round table in Cambridge with participation from New Jersey-based biopharmaceutical company Celgene.

He will meet with British Prime Minister David Cameron on the trip and watch football team Arsenal play Aston Villa on Sunday — but also hopes on Sunday to catch the Super Bowl, the biggest annual showdown of the U.S.'s National Football League.

Quoted

"One of the main objectives for the trip is to focus on the opportunities that exist between the UK and New Jersey and our country as a whole." Christie

"I'm looking forward to going to the Arsenal game and hopefully watch a bit of the Super Bowl as well and do the work we need to do to bring more jobs back to New Jersey by creating a stronger relationship between our state and our third largest trading partner," Christie said.

Last year, Christie went on a three-day trade mission to Mexico and spent a significant amount of time out of New Jersey while traveling the United States as the then-chairman of the Republican Governors Association. REUTERS

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2

CULTURE

Twitter feed

Today, Marlon Wayans isn't too concerned about his grammar or spelling, Whitney Cummings is eavesdropping, Roseanne Barr is curious and Sarah Silverman is having a blast.

@MarlonWayans: Snowed in in IOWA. I know that's gotta be bad f—ing english

@WhitneyCummings: Marriage wisdom at JFK: just head a man snap to his wife "you're just going to have to change that about yourself"

@therealroseanne: Maybe #Cosby has a clear conscience. If he does he should say so!

@SarahKSilverman: Just chillin at home, marrying my hand sanitizers.

1

The Timberlake baby you knew was coming is coming

JUSTINTIMBERLAKE / INSTAGRAM

Justin Timberlake is just the latest person in an impressive line of people to announce that his wife, Jessica Biel, is pregnant. But I guess since it's actually his kid and all, his announcement should count more. The pop star/actor/professional celebrity celebrated his birthday over the weekend by posting a photo to his Instagram account of him kissing Biel's very pregnant belly. (Or at least we're assuming it's Biel. Because it would be really, really weird if it wasn't.) He captioned the photo with some heartfelt thanks and an abundance of hashtags, including #BoyOrGirl and #YouNeverKnow. And, listen, I don't want to tell Timberlake how to do his job as a soon-to-be dad, but he does know that they will, in fact, know at some point, right?

THE WORD

Ned Ehrbar takes on the world of gossip.

NED EHRBAR
@Nedrick • ned.ehrbar@metro.us

2

Dame Helen Mirren, considerate commuter

J.L. NYC / INSTAGRAM

Dame Helen Mirren — star of "The Queen," "Red" and countless demeaning "Can you believe how good she looks at that age" articles — was spotted by an eagle-eyed Instagram user taking the R train in Manhattan recently, and naturally the British actress was showing remarkable decorum and etiquette. She kept her bag in her lap! And she even took a middle seat even though she didn't have to. All class, that one.

David Beckham powerless against teenagers

David Beckham has spent most of his life being an incredibly famous athlete and underwear model, but he's quickly transitioning into his next career — begrudgingly silent father to teens — and he's not taking it well. His oldest kid, Brooklyn, is 15, and the next, Romeo, is on the cusp of teenhood. Then there are two more after that, all ready and willing to subvert any sense of identity dad might have once had. So, how are things going over at the Beckham estate? "To be honest, I've become a taxi driver overnight with the kids," he tells Jimmy Kimmel. "I'm literally an Uber driver now." Literally? Wow. I wonder if he does airport runs.

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3 Katy Perry and Missy light up halftime

If you're like us, what you really wanted to see during last night's Super Bowl was Katy Perry's halftime performance — and it didn't disappoint.

From her entrance on a golden mechanical lion while singing her megahit "Roar" to her duet with Lenny Kravitz on "I Kissed A Girl," Perry managed to give her fans all of her hits in one shot.

Despite the fireworks, it was a cameo by Missy Elliott that stole the show. The rapper came out to perform her hit "Get Ur Freak On" and promptly dazzled social media, leaving many hoping she'll release new music soon.

GETTY IMAGES

Box office

Americans still seeing 'American Sniper' because America!

What has now become an annual custom — movies about the War on Terror released in January and doing impressive business — continued to pay off. In its third weekend, Clint Eastwood's "American Sniper" continued its reign, although it may be on the wane. Its third weekend turned in "merely" $31.9 million, a 51 percent drop from its second, and on Super Bowl weekend. Still, it's now made $248.9 million, with more dough — and more think pieces and Facebook posts from your relatives — to come.

Of course, it's not like "Sniper" had much competition. The biggest came from the teen time travel romp "Project Almanac," which marshaled the powers of social media and youth culture en route to a gross of only $8.5 million. Faring even worse was the race drama "Black or White," which made only $6.5 million — just $2.5 million less than what star Kevin Costner paid to make it happen. MATT PRIGGE

American moviegoers keep going to see Bradley Cooper look anguished in "American Sniper." / KEITH BERNSTEIN

ABC VIA GETTY IMAGES

Daily video

TEAM COCO / YOUTUBE

Conan's Clueless Gamer heads to the Super Bowl

Just in time for the Super Bowl, Conan O'Brien put out his biggest "Clueless Gamer" segment yet, traveling to Phoenix to play "Mortal Kombat X" with the Seahawks' Marshawn Lynch and the Patriots' Rob Gronkowski, and oh man is it epic. It's a tough call as to what's the best part of it: Lynch nearly walking out after seeing the first supergory finishing move in the game, Gronkowski trying to get some Lipitor endorsement money or the two NFL stars singing the praises of the much less violent "Mario Kart." But that "Mortal Kombat" version of the Super Bowl trophy is pretty sweet.

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The 10 best time travel movies of all (ahem) time

JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT AND BRUCE WILLIS ARE THE SAME PERSON IN "LOOPER."
PROVIDED

"Project Almanac" enters a proud pantheon of movies that tackle the super-speculative world of time travel. Here are some of its better predecessors:

1. 'Looper' (2012)
2. 'Twelve Monkeys' (1995)
3. 'Time Bandits' (1981)
4. 'Primer' (2004)
5. 'Back to the Future' (1985)
6. 'Terminator 2: Judgment Day' (1991)
7. 'Midnight in Paris' (2011)
8. 'Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure' (1989)
9. 'Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban' (2004)
10. 'X-Men: Days of Future Past' (2014)

Get to know the cast of 'Project Almanac'

The new-found footage, time-travel movie features a new batch of breakthrough performers.

NED EHRBAR

Jonny Weston

The role: David, the brainiac hero of the story with some unresolved issues about his dad's mysterious death.

Where you've seen him before: Catching waves in "Chasing Mavericks" and romancing Juliette Lewis in "Kelly & Cal"

Where you'll see him next: Joining the YA dystopia in "Insurgent" and opposite Zac Efron in "We Are Your Friends."

WIREIMAGE

Sofia Black-D'Elia

The role: Jessie Pierce, the hottest and coolest girl in school who's hot and cool and everybody loves her because she's heaven.

Where you've seen her before: On TV in the U.S. version of "Skins" and here and there on "Gossip Girl."

Where you'll see her next: Fighting an outbreak in "Viral" and going biblical in "Ben-Hur."

FILMMAGIC

Sam Lerner

The role: Quinn, the loudmouth comic relief pal with some ideas about how to abuse their new time traveling powers.

Where you've seen him before: On the brilliant-but-canceled "Suburgatory" and in the L.A. indie "Nobody Walks."

Where you'll see him next: Continuing to pop up on "The Goldbergs" and in the "Fatal Attraction" goes to high school thriller, "Stripped of Innocence."

GETTY IMAGES

Virginia Gardner

The role: Christina, David's younger sister, and the group's go-to camera operator.

Where you've seen her before: Here and there on shows like "Glee," "The Goldbergs" and "Hart of Dixie."

Where you'll see her next: The coming-of-age drama "Good Kids."

WIREIMAGE

Allen Evangelista

The role: Adam, David's other comic relief pal, though less loudmouth and comic than Quinn.

Where you've seen him before: On TV in "The Secret Life of the American Teenager" and "Zoey 101."

Where you'll see him next: He just popped up again on "Brooklyn Nine-Nine," which could become a regular thing.

GETTY IMAGES

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That's Michael Fassbender underneath a papier-mache head in the Sundance hit "Frank." / MAGNOLIA PICTURES

'FRANK' WAS ONE OF THE BIGGER DEALS AT LAST YEAR'S SUNDANCE

STREAM THIS

Matt Prigge's guide to what you can watch on the Internet.

MATT PRIGGE
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Indie

'Frank'

Netflix Instant
The Sundance Film Festival just ended, and with it came a new pile of hyped indies to flood theaters and VOD over the next year. One that had a big splash last year was this Irish musical dramedy, which largely obscures its most famous face: the one belonging to Michael Fassbender, who fronts his avant-rock band underneath a bulbous papier-mache head. But as with its central musicians, it's not a film for a mass audience. Viewed outside a festival experience, it's a weirdly charming (and not a little bit quirky) look at how bands are shaped by social media, and the damage never more dialed-up commercial awareness can do to delicate artists seeking only to ply their trade.

Animation

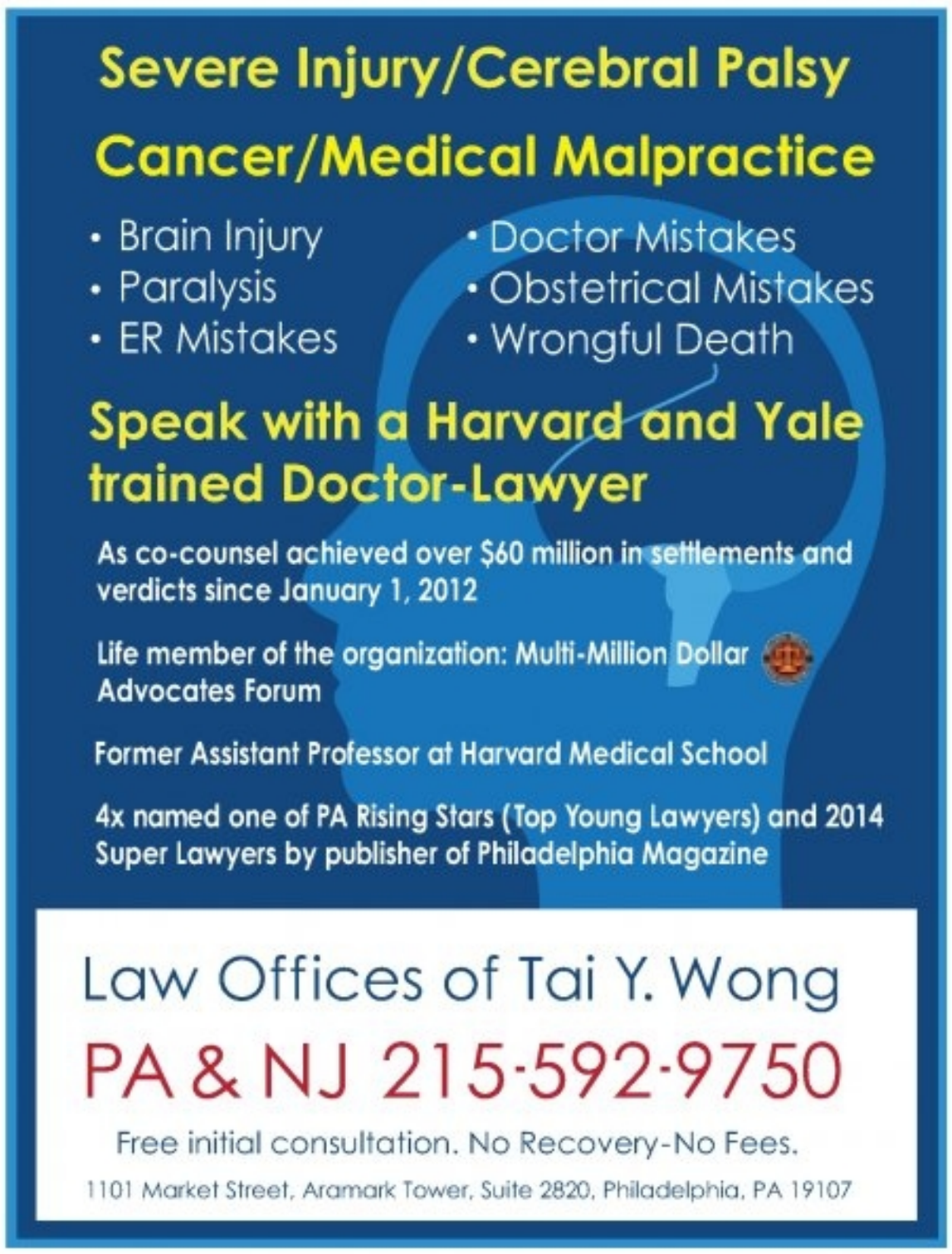
'Fantasia'

Netflix Instant
Walt Disney's opus was meant to class up a populist joint, luring audiences into gnawing on cultural vegetables via classical music appreciation. It tanked, but what survives is the film itself, featuring some of the most beautiful animation, performed by a company working at their arguably creative zenith.

Blockbuster

'The Interview'

Netflix Instant
It's a go-to joke now, but we swear this Seth Rogen-James Franco assassination comedy is hilarious, as long as you lower expectations to manageable levels. At the least there's a cute dog.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Al Pacino on forgetting lines

Interview. The screen and stage legend talks 'The Humbling' and its portrayal of an aging actor.

"I must be getting old, because it's fun," Al Pacino says about doing press. The reasons are simple. "Nobody talks to me. I've got young kids, and they never talk to me at all. I never have a chance to talk to adults."
And Pacino can talk. He's promoting "The Humbling," based on the Philip Roth novel, in which he plays an aging stage legend who winds up in a relationship with a much younger lesbian (Greta Gerwig). But the conversation roams freely.

Why the film's mismatched leads match: "She's offbeat, and the character I play is offbeat. They somehow belong together. You just don't think about it," he says. Part of that is because her character doesn't care. "Early on he says, 'I'm too old for you.' And she says he's not. They're just of the same world. Their eccentricities allow that to not be an issue."

AL PACINO PLAYS AN AGING ACTOR WHO FALLS IN LOVE WITH A LESBIAN (GRETA GERWIG) IN THE PHILIP ROTH ADAPTATION"THE HUMBLING," NOW ON VOD.
ALCHEMY

The difficulties of doing theater as you get up in years: "Doing a stage play eight times a week — that's an endurance test, especially in the roles [his character] is playing," he says. "You don't walk through 'King Lear.' It can't be done!" And it's not just him. "I know a couple people who can't go on stage anymore. And they're great actors."

A theater story: A few years ago Pacino was doing a revival of "Glengarry Glen Ross" on Broadway. During rehearsals, in front of a live audience, his mind wandered. "All of a sudden this actor turns to me in the play and screams, 'Shut the f— up!' And I just looked out at the audience. And they roared. I didn't know why he was yelling at me. And I realized I hadn't given him his cue. I had to give him the cue so he could say, 'Shut the f— up,'" he says, laughing "I almost felt like we should have kept that in there. We got a great laugh!"

MATT PRIGGE
@mattprigge
matt.prigge@metro.us

Happy Valley

Al as JoPa?

Pacino has been involved with an HBO film about the Jerry Sandusky scandal, with him as Joe Paterno. But it's stalled because, he says, the script needs more work: "The movie has to focus on what it's going to say, what it's about." It might happen, but not soon.

In the meantime he's a big fan of "Happy Valley," Amir Bar-Lev's recent documentary on the subject. "That's a tough act to follow," he says. "It just unfolds for you. It doesn't have many answers. It leaves doors open and you just don't know about certain things. You certainly don't know what Paterno's part was. What did he say? What did he avoid? That's some momentous stuff. That's the stuff tragedies are made of. That's 'King Lear' stuff."

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Interview. The Backstreet Boys take a hard look at their past in a new documentary

You can watch our video chat with the Boys on metro.us. / METRO

The Backstreet Boys are taking a moment to look back. In fact, they've created an entire documentary to do so. Twenty-two years after starting, the Boys — Nick Carter, Howie Dorough, Brian Littrell, AJ McLean and Kevin Richardson — let a camera crew follow them as they revisit their past and record their 2013 album, "In a World Like This. The result is "Show 'Em What You're Made Of," available now on VOD.

When you saw the finished documentary, were there any parts that were particularly hard to watch?
Nick: I didn't like, necessarily, watching myself cry and go through that whole experience with my teacher, because I'd kind of put that in the back of my mind. It was kind of a tough time in my life.

AJ: I think there were high moments and then there were low moments, even making the film. Some moments were much more emotional than others. I think it was a great learning experience — a relearning experience — for each of us.

Brian: My voice therapy stuff was hard for me to watch, just because it was such a trying time in my life that I happened to be right in the middle of, so to introduce it to the world … . It was something that I really tried to hide. I didn't want it to be in the documentary, but it just kind of evolved and came out. But it's good that I'm better now and getting stronger each and every day. NED EHRBAR

Back in the day

Did any of the outfits from back in the '90s make you cringe seeing them now?
Howie: Absolutely. Of course.
Kevin: There were quite a few, quite a few. Lots of interesting fashion.

Were there any that particularly stick out?
Brian: We just saw an interview of us backstage in the green room for the Grammy Awards. … It was 1999, and the question was, "So what do you Backstreet Boys think about the Internet? Do you think it's going to be something pretty cool?" And [AJ] is in a white top hat, white suit. …He looked like… Willy Wonka.

AJ: I looked like Dr. Seuss.

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Prince Farming tries to find the (right) one

Looks like another romantic date is ahead on "The Bachelor." See how it turns out tonight at 8 p.m. on ABC. / LEWIS JACOBS, ABC

Interview. Chris Soules says it's not that easy picking one true love out of 30 women.

Chris Soules' journey to true love on the "Bachelor" has some twists and turns ahead for viewers, though he tells us the show finished shooting around Thanksgiving. That journey so far has involved more tractors and goat milking for the ladies than most people experience on the way to marriage, but that's just what happens when you date Prince Farming.

Has it been weird to see all of this stuff again?
It's been neat to see everything play out again. It brings back a lot of memories and it seems like almost years ago that we went through that whole entire process, but it's been really fun to watch so far.

What was your plan going into shooting?
Going into this, my number one goal was to find a wife. I've been looking for a wife for a long time — looking for a soulmate more than anything. My hope going into this was that this would give me the opportunity to meet some girls I'd never had the opportunity to meet before. Given the fact that I'm from a small town, this would maybe be a different avenue that would allow me to meet someone.

What kind of qualities did you look for?
The main thing that I was looking for is someone I could spend the rest of my life with and someone who I can laugh with who is my best friend.

What's the hardest part of being on the show?
Meeting 30 incredible women and then sending 29 of them home. Having real feelings for a handful of those women, that made it really hard.

Did it get harder as the show went on to make your choices?
Much harder. I thought it would be easy to begin with because I wouldn't have those feelings develop. But it wasn't, because there were so many great women, and I knew that I was making judgments on people I really hadn't gotten to know.

LISA WEIDENFELD
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The one

Who to pick?

How did you make your final decision?
It really came down to my gut. I just had to follow that. ... In real life, I have a support system, which is my family, with my mom and my dad and my sisters, and I didn't have that while on the show, so you just have to follow your gut and use your own intuition and make the best call you can make.

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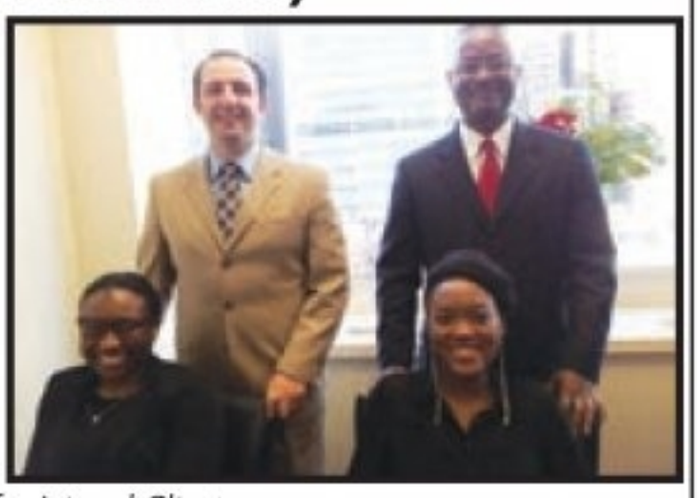

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Get your man to go veg

Diet. How to cut back on meat without alienating the committed carnivore you love.

How's your healthier eating resolution going? If you've had better intentions than follow-through, get back on the wagon this week with a change that won't turn your life upside down: try having a Meatless Monday.

Diana Rice, a dietician with the Meatless Monday campaign, has plenty of suggestions to get you started. But she also speaks from experience when it comes to what will likely be your biggest obstacle (after cravings): the man in your life. "My husband is from the South, and growing up he didn't really think about the advantages of vegetarian anything," she says. Bacon and eggs for breakfast, a ham sandwich for lunch and a steak for dinner were pretty standard. And while you probably know that eating less meat can lower cholesterol and reduce your risk of cancer, diabetes and heart disease, a lecture about the health benefits of veggies might be the only thing less appetizing to him than trading steak for tofu.

But don't give up hope. Rice, whose husband often serves as the "guinea pig" for her foodie experiments, shared some ideas to win him over.

Small changes

Don't get crazy

"If you're just starting out, don't buy tempeh and try to make some really weird vegetarian thing that's totally unfamiliar to you," cautions Rice. Work your way up to it by starting with what you already know: chili with beans instead of ground beef or using sauteed mushrooms as the main part of a dish instead of a side.

Play up other flavors in a familiar dish

"Pasta is such a versatile dish. It'd definitely be the place I'd start," says Rice. Use cherry tomatoes instead of sauce from a jar, fresh basil instead of dried and really good cheese, and he'll forget he's not eating meat. Shop at a farmers market so you know you're only buying what's in season, when it tastes best, and talk to the vendors to get ideas.

Chef's choice

You're the boss

Most guys still aren't doing the cooking, so if they're hungry they'll probably eat what's in front of them. Don't be afraid to try something just because you think he won't like it. "A lot of times what I'll do is tell [my husband], 'What we're having for dinner is a really great pasta dish,'" Rice says. "It just doesn't happen to have any meat in it."

If you're trying to cut back on meat, you don't have to be stuck eating alone. / ISTOCK

Think like a guy

If your guy likes steaks, try making a vegetable steak: Cut a 1-inch-thick slice out of a cauliflower, brush it with olive oil and grill it, then serve it with some A1 sauce. "Having the vegetable be a standalone in the same way we might expect the steak or a piece fish to be can help us overcome that mentality that there is something lacking from the meal," says Rice.

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PLUS

Recipe

Vegan Barbecue Burgers

When you want a burger, nothing else will do. This recipe by Kristy Turner from her new cookbook, "But I Could Never Go Vegan!," doesn't skimp on flavor, just the red meat. There are also recipes for all the fixins – tempeh bacon, homemade pickled red cabbage, plant-based cheese and even barbecue sauce — to round out the dish.

Go to www.metro.us for the recipe.

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Villanova engineering students hit the Philly Auto Show

Formula racing. The team worked for months to build the car.

For Villanova University senior Albert Montemuro, this week's Philadelphia Auto Show represents a dream come true.

Montemuro is the captain of the university's NovaRacing team, made up of 20 students who have spent months designing and building a formula race car for the Society of Automotive Engineers' annual competition in May. The car is on display at the Philadelphia Convention Center for the auto show, which runs through Sunday.

"I've dreamed of building a car my whole life," says Montemuro, a mechanical engineering major from New Jersey. "I had changed the oil on my dad's car a couple of times, but I'd never really worked on a car until I got to school."

We asked Montemuro to break down how he and his team created their car from scratch.

Learning from their mistakes

The NovaRacing team has been taking part in the competition since 2009. "We do all of the design work ourselves," he explains. "So then we come back, the first thing we do is look at what we did wrong. We look at what other teams did right and then we start doing

School. How parents can takes steps to navigate Common Core

There probably hasn't been a more controversial change in education policy than the implementation of Common Core: A new set of standards that proponents say will make education across the country more consistent.

"What obscures the debates about Common Core is that many people think that it is a set curriculum, says Scott Farber, the founder of A-List Education, a test prep and tutoring company that works with students throughout the East Coast. "But it's not. It doesn't say things like, 'You need to read these 10 books.' Instead it sets aspirations and benchmarks for schools."

Farber and his company run in-school and after-school programs in several states, including Pennsylvania. He says the parents he works with often pepper him with questions about the standards.

"The math in particular has been difficult for people to adapt to," he says. "It's because math doesn't look like the math that parents remember."

Farber offers these tips for families trying to navigate the new curriculum.

At home

Outside the classroom

Farber also recommends parents encourage their children to read a variety of books and stories, particularly nonfiction, at home.

"In college, most students — unless they are English majors — are going to be reading mostly nonfiction," he says.

Know what's happening in class

According to Farber, studies have shown that American parents are more involved in their children's schools than families in other countries. "But parents should become more directly involved with what's happening in the classroom, not just doing things like volunteering with the PTA — which is also very important — but also knowing what's happening in class."

Students examine their handiwork in a Villanova parking lot. / PROVIDED

The process

A virtual prototype

After reflecting on the last competition and process, the students begin planning next year's car. "We use a computer-aided design program called Soldworker, and we basically have the car designed on the computer before we start building," Montemuro explains. "We do that over the whole summer. The team is pretty diverse location-wise [during the summer], so we have Skype meetings and work from home." This year's car features a carbon fiber body and is more lightweight than previous vehicles, according to Montemuro.

The students also balance designing the car with their internships and summer jobs. Montemuro for example, spent the summer interning at Lockheed Martin.

research."

Raising the money

While Villanova provides about half of the $50,000 needed to build the car, "it's up to us to come up with that the rest of that $50k," Montemuro says. The funds come from a combination of grants, in-kind donations of materials and fundraising. The experience has been memorable and has given the team a leg up while they are planning their future careers.

"It's hands-on work, and that's something that employers look for," he says.

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Don't be afraid to ask school administrators about the changes. / ISTOCK

Organize meetings with school administrators

"One of the things we've been doing is encouraging schools to give presentations to parents about the changes," he says. "The whole goal is to provide a stronger sense of the knowledge.

Research the tools being used

"It's important for parents to know what books are actually being used in class," he notes. "What assessments are being used to judge the students' progress? When they know what those are, things become easier." LG

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Job search. Keeping things casual is key to interviewing well

Asking questions throughout the interview will make the conversation more relaxed. / ISTOCK

The 360 degree interview is often a difficult concept for job-seekers to wrap their heads around — many of us have been taught that an interview is a place where you must impress your employer to have a shot at that elusive job.

Here's how to get the most out of your next job interview by engaging beyond the standard Q&A.

1 Practice the art of "small talk." We're all familiar with interview small talk — the slightly awkward, polite conversation that happens right at the beginning of your interview. Rather than rushing to get to the "real" part of the interview, let the conversation flow, ask questions and engage in actual conversation.

It's important to remember that your interviewer is an actual person, and not just a barrier between you and the job. Think of yourself as a business partner — your job is to represent your brand and build relationships. Try taking the lead in conversations, and initiate small talk. Your interviewer will likely appreciate your genuine interest in how their day is going.

2 Change the flow of dialogue. Unless you're specifically instructed to hold your questions for the designated time, asking questions during the interview is a great way to show your ability to converse and probe for information. Questions such as "Can you elaborate on that a little?" and "Can you give me an example of that?" allow you to describe how you would handle an everyday situation at the company once you get hired.

Back and forth

Make conversation

It's easy to tell someone to "make great conversation" or "ask great questions" — but what does that mean? In your interview, make sure that the questions or conversations you bring up focus on career success on a high level. If you are interviewing with your potential manager, you should definitely be able to ask some very specific questions about how the role fits into the team dynamic.

Talentegg.com is a job board and online career resource for college students and recent graduates.
TalentEgg

How to future-proof yourself (and your job)

Planning. Don't let technology hinder your career.

Author Scott Steinberg says it's important to start working on new tech skills now. / ISTOCK

With all of the technological and scientific advances out there, it can be hard for ordinary workers to keep up — with many worrying that they will be left behind.

"I think people need to do a little critical assessment and ask: 'What do I need to do to grow?'" says Scott Steinberg, CEO of the management consulting and market research firm TechSavvy Global. "Ask yourself, 'Are there steps that I should be taking?' We often get so caught up in the day-to-day that we forget to take a step back."

Steinberg — whose new book "Make Change Work for You: 10 Ways to Future-Proof Yourself, Fearlessly Innovate, and Succeed Despite Uncertainty" is on shelves now — has these suggestions for workers looking to stay ahead of the curve.

Have a plan

"You need to be purposeful and strategic," he notes. "[Whatever field you are in], things are going to look a lot different in ten years. So what do you need to do to get there?"

Steinberg uses people currently working in sales as a good example of a field that should always be looking forward. "Customers aren't going to want the same thing over and over," he points out. "So you can either choose to do nothing now, or you can prepare."

Recognize what skills transfer

"You can also ask, 'Where can I go to pick up new skills?'" he notes. "If I am a copywriter by day, I can easily transition to a marketing role or a social media role." Networking and thinking outside of the box is key.

Assess your options

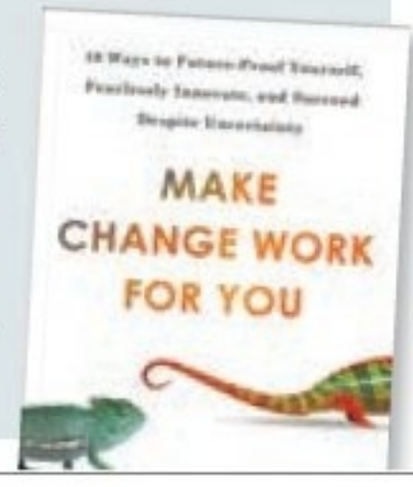
If you feel your field is about to change drastically, it can be better not to make your salary your number one priority when considering new positions. "It may be that you have to take a side step — or even a back step — in rank and pay," Steinberg says. "Sometimes you have to do that and just say, 'I can be the Vice President of Marketing at this smaller startup as long as I am focused on my goal in the end.'"

Inner strength

Be Resilient

"Really, the most innovative people are pretty resilient and resourceful, Steinberg notes. Carefully planning your next move and thoughtfully considering your options is also an essential part of making drastic changes to your career path. "Choosing to do nothing is a choice," Steinberg notes. Consider volunteering or taking classes to build your skills. "There's an old saying: There's a lot of luck in hard work," Steinberg says.

"We always encourage people to be more courageous in their choices," says Steinberg.



Learn from others

Steinberg says there is a common thread among the people who he's talked to about their career journeys. "They all wish that they had made the leap sooner," he says. "What we found was not that people can't be successful, but that most of the time it was fear that was holding them back."

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Horoscope

♒ Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb. 18 Your personal life will be in turmoil. Wait for a break in the chaos before you take action. Use your time wisely.

♓ Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20 A partnership will help you excel. Getting involved in an effort to help others will put you in touch with someone who shares your concerns and thirst for improvement.

♈ Aries | March 21-April 20 The calmer you are, the more you will accomplish. Fretting and fussing will be a waste of time and energy. Accept an enticing invitation.

♉ Taurus | April 21-May 21 Don't be upset if you are left out of something that you were planning to attend. Do something else that is geared toward your benefit.

♊ Gemini | May 22-June 20 You'll face an important turning point. If you love someone, share your feelings. The response you get will have an influence on your future.

♋ Cancer | June 21-July 22 Property investments or a move will be profitable. Make your home the backdrop for a special rendezvous.

♌ Leo | July 23-Aug. 22 You should put greater emphasis and more time into an important relationship. Your kindness and generosity will entice allies, leaving any opposition ineffectual.

♍ Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Travel and communication are highlighted. Step up and honor the promises you have made but not yet fulfilled.

♎ Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22 If there is someone you want to get to know better, make your move. The response you get will greatly affect your feelings.

♏ Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Stop procrastinating. Feeling sorry for yourself or wishing things were different will not get you where you want to be.

♐ Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21 If you have wronged someone, set the record straight. It's never too late to apologize. If you dispel any bad feelings that have developed, you'll feel better.

♑ Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan. 20 Change your routine and focus on love and romance. Pick up something special for someone you want to impress. EUGENIA LAST

Sudoku: Easy and hard

					9	1		5
1	2		6	4				7
		8			3			
	8	6			1		9	
			3		4			
	7		2			6	3	
			1			5		
8				5	6		7	3
9		5	4					

1	7		8			6		
3		6	9					
8				1				2
		2		3		9		1
	1						4	
4		5		6		3		
2				4				9
					8	4		7
		7			1		8	3

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Letters to the editor

NYC isn't the only place in the world

It seems that those that live in New York City were "underwhelmed" by the storm and can't stop complaining. Those of us on Long Island had a different experience. When you live in Manhattan — specifically below 96th St. — everything gets cleared first and your snow is removed and not piled into a small mountain. You didn't have to deal with clearing 16 inches of snow and dreading the ice wall that the plow leaves in your driveway. Or not being able to open your kitchen door because of the snowdrifts. There's a whole world out there beyond the borders and bubble of Manhattan.
GISEL R ENGLISH, VIA EMAIL

Nature not predictable

I think the mayor's response to the hourly updates provided by the news media was very adequate. The fault I find is with the unnecessarily frequent interruptions by the meteorologists providing unclear and "possibly/probably" misinformation. The mayor (like the rest of us) was merely preparing for the platitudinous "blizzard of 2015." Weather is weather — no more, no less, and no matter how many hourly updates, no one can change the course of Mother Nature.
JOYE CASE, VIA EMAILH

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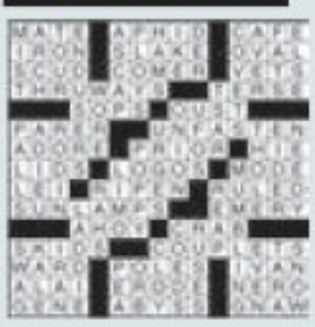
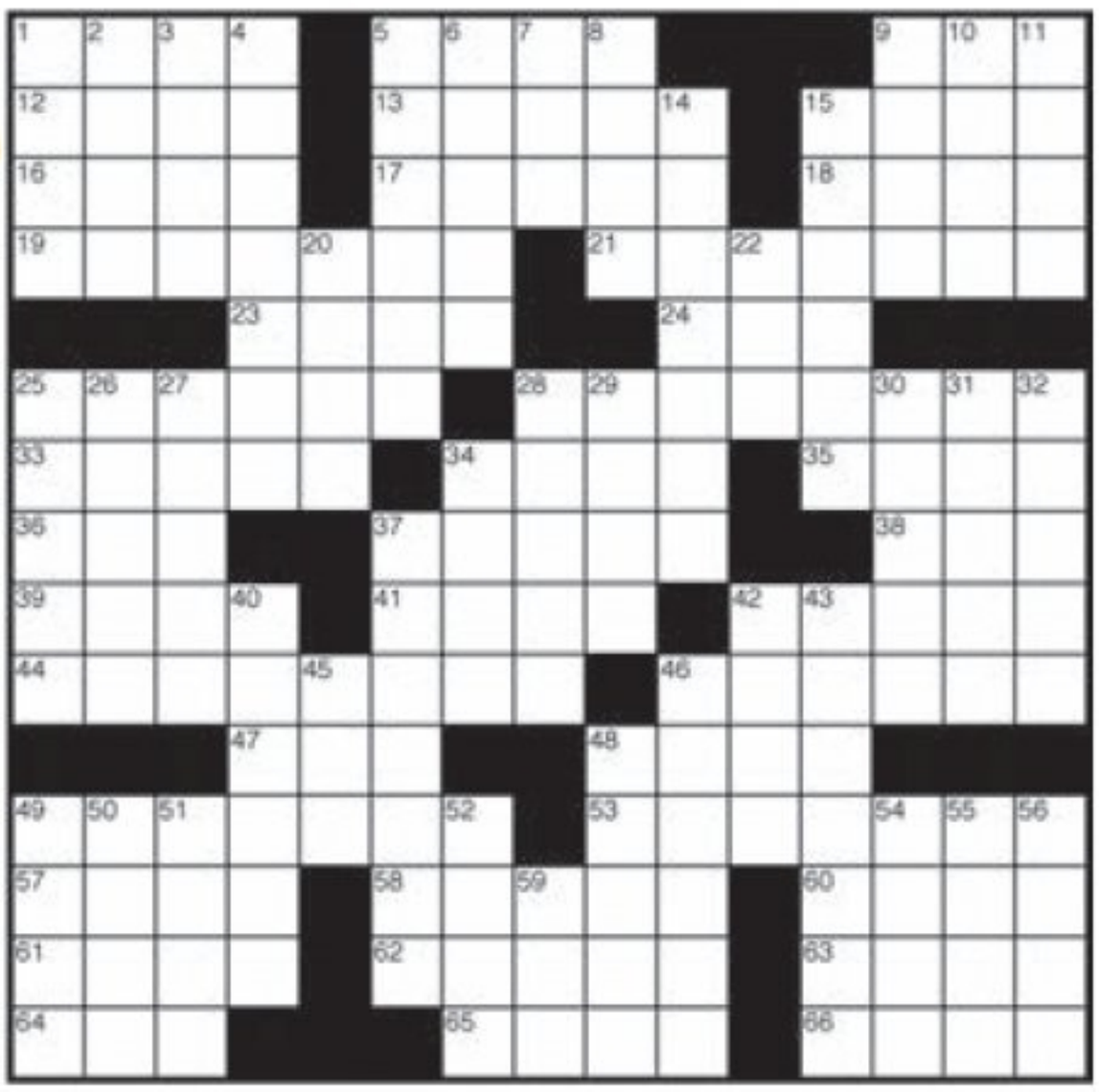
Crossword

Across
1 Baby soother
5 "Ow!"
9 Quick lunch?
12 Hodgepodge
13 Kate, at first
15 Dingbat
16 Spread out, as a map
17 "The Purple Rose of —"
18 Disentangle
19 — riche
21 Fair maidens
23 Tarzan's title
24 Airport closer
25 Police bulletins
28 Beach sandal (hyph.)
33 Undersized pups
34 Warlike son of Hera
35 River in the Congo
36 Avg. size
37 Sumptuous
38 Tooth-puller's org.
39 "I" problems
41 Slugger's stats
42 Hindu rope-climber
44 Somewhat pessimistic
46 Monument-building Pharaoh
47 Response on deck
48 Bored response
49 Far-out planet
53 Daunt
57 With, to Henri
58 Precise
60 Growing medium
61 Interlock
62 Clear the wings
63 "— do for now"
64 Paul Anka's "— Beso"
65 Attired
66 Between ports

Down
1 Tweety or Sylvester
2 Dog-food brand
3 "Instead of" word
4 Change over
5 Film awards
6 Self-mover's rental (hyph.)
7 Dernier —
8 Medicinal plant
9 Brosnan role
10 Prospector's find
11 Ring stats
14 Kind of look
15 Martial art (2 wds.)
20 Snacks
22 Alley from Moo
25 Wanted-poster word
26 "Hasta —!"
27 Finance
28 Kind of cocktail
29 Not so much
30 Drips
31 1950s record
32 Bartlett et al.
34 Edmonton prov.
37 Smoothed, as feathers
40 Grab
42 Spotted animal
43 Memory gap
45 Provo sch.
46 Harangued
48 Desert bloomer
49 Point the finger at
50 Arden and Curie
51 Tijuana coin
52 Co. honcho
54 Goes bad
55 Horrid-tasting
56 Miss Cinders of the comics
59 Catch a bug

Weekend's answer





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Cleveland rock

76ers Cleveland bound

The 76ers fought hard in their comeback attempt in Atlanta Saturday, nearly upsetting the NBA's best team. And though they left Georgia with a loss in the stat book, the Sixers will travel to face LeBron James and the Cavaliers with confidence Monday. Philly looks for an upset win on the road at 7 p.m. tonight before making a quick turnaround to host the Denver Nuggets Tuesday.

Union's Casey says it's playoffs or bust in 2015

MLS. Conor Casey will return for at least one more year to take care of some unfinished business.

For the Union's Conor Casey, throw away the 56 games, 88 points, 22 wins and 18 goals that he's tallied during his two-year career with the team.

With training camp underway for the 2015 season, the veteran has just one thing on his mind when the regular season begins in March.

"The playoffs," Casey said. "We haven't made them since I've been here. As a forward you always think about the points that you missed and not the ones you put in, so I want to score as many goals as I possibly can. Thinking about the past two seasons, a goal here or there would've clinched a playoff spot for us and I'm hoping to erase those memories this year. With this group of guys, we expect to be there."

Casey, 33, inked a one-year deal with the team just before training camp began last week. He's been one of the Union's most reliable forwards offensively in his time with the organization.

His 18 goals ranks third on the team's all-time scoring list while his 68 career goals in the MLS ranks 23rd all-time and places him sixth among active players.

"I wanted to finish business," said Casey, about deciding to come back. "We came up short the past two years and I feel like last season, in the second-half of the season we played some really good games together."

Casey started in 18 games last season for the Union. With the additions of forwards C.J. Sapong and Dzenan Catic in the offseason, it's unknown what his role will become. He's still training to play 90 minutes, but he's well aware of how much talent the team now has at the forward positions.

"It's great to add depth and competition to the roster," Casey said. "I think [this group] has the potential to be the best I've played with. We've had Sebastien [Le Toux] and myself here for a bit and Andrew [Wenger] came in last year and was able to make an impact. It's a long season, so to have a handful of guys now who are potentially starters in this league up top is great. We'll be pushing each other the whole way and making each other better. A lot of guys will have the chance to play and contribute."

The team is focused on starting the season off strong. In the past two seasons they've gone 3-4-2 in the month of March, which to Casey isn't good enough for a team trying to reach the playoffs.

"We started off the season a bit slow the past two years, which really put us in a tough position with the season we had left," Casey said. "We really had to scramble for points the rest of the way to get back into things. That's something that we're aware of and we want to be sure we can come in and not leave ourselves too big of a gap this year."

The Union begin preseason play on February 7 against the Jacksonville Armada. The regular season begins March 7 against the Colorado Rapids.

JEFF MCMENAMIN
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Casey and the Union's offense should improve in 2015. / GETTY IMAGES

Quoted

"We just barely came up short, but now we'll have the chance to play a full season with pretty much the same roster and I'm expecting a different story." Conor Casey

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Could rule changes fix Phillies' Howard?

MLB. A proposed rule eliminating the defensive shift could prove to be a boon for Ryan Howard.

MLB commissioner Rob Manfred surprised the nation when he recently informed ESPN's Karl Ravech that his office is considering eliminating shifts. To many the move is borderline heresy, but fans have to realize where Manfred is coming from. Baseball is in its greatest offensive drought in more than 40-years.

Rule changes are not without precedent. Commissioners have made dramatic changes to amp up the offense. The height of mounds was lowered two-generations ago and balls were manufactured with more bounce, which effectively ended the dead-ball era.

If Manfred acts quickly with shift legislation that will have a great impact on slow, lefthanded pull hitters. There's no slower, lefthanded hitter, who pulls the ball more than Ryan Howard.

If you scan Howard's batted ball spray charts, the Big Piece hits practically the same way he did back in 2006 when he was NL MVP. But shifts have followed shortly after he emerged as a mighty power threat. Opposing managers adjusted to Howard but he has yet to make an adjustment in a game of adjustments. But what if Manfred enacts the no shift rule? How much would Howard's average climb?

"Quite a bit," an AL scout said. "The way they shift on him makes a big difference. Howard's average could go from .220 to .290. It would make that big of a difference. He hits so many rockets over the second baseman's head, if the second baseman played in his normal position. But when Howard bats the second baseman is the second rightfielder."

By the numbers

.223

Ryan Howard's batting average in 2014. He also led the National League with 190 strikeouts.

If the rules change, shouldn't Howard's value rise?

"I would think that would be the case," an AL scout said. "It would be huge for him since he never adjusted to the shift."

Indeed. Metro asked Howard last season if he ever considered bunting to beat the shift. "I've considered it," Howard said.

It will be fascinating to see if Manfred is as proactive as he seems. The commish is talking about adding pitch clocks to speed up the game, restricting hitters timeouts once they enter the batters box and doing whatever it takes to increase offense.

The average major league batting average decreased to just .251 in 2014 and shifts have tripled in use since 2012.

This particular rule change would certainly be good news for Howard and the Phillies, who could find an instant market for Howard or watch as he potentially bounces back at the plate.

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Ryan Howard's $20 million salary makes him hard for the Phillies to move heading into the 2015 season. / GETTY IMAGES

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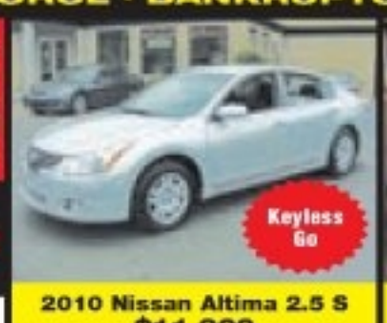
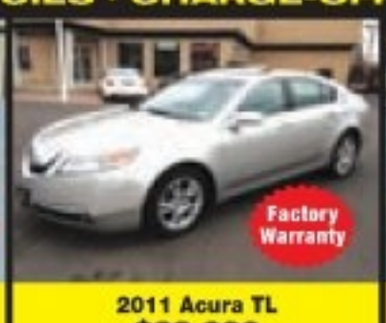
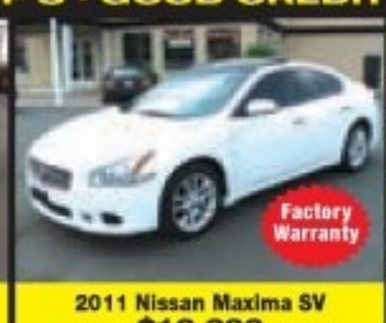


2010 Nissan Altima 2.5 S
$11,900



2011 Acura TL
$22,900



2011 Nissan Maxima SV
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2013 Dodge Charger SE
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2009 Range Rover Sport HSE 4X4
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2007 Honda Odyssey EX-L
$13,900

2010 Dodge Challenger R/T
$23,900

2011 Kia Sorento LX
$15,900

2011 Dodge Ram 1500 Quad Cab
$17,900

2008 Infiniti M35x AWD
$13,900

2011 Ford Taurus SEL
$15,900

2014 Nissan Altima 2.5 S
$15,900

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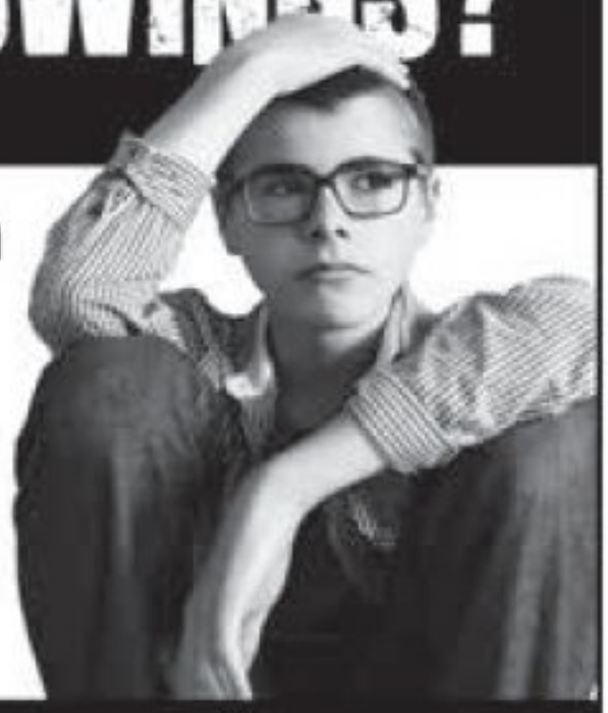

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